



June 9, 2005

Agents seize 62 kilograms of cocaine; Three defendants are charged with trafficking

A federal grand jury in Providence yesterday charged three men with cocaine trafficking after DEA agents and Providence Police seized approximately 62 kilograms of cocaine on June 7. It is one of the largest cocaine seizures ever made in Rhode Island.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente, June Stansbury, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration, and Providence Police Chief Dean Esserman announced a two-count indictment, which the grand jury returned yesterday in U.S. District Court, Providence.

At about 6:30 PM on Tuesday, DEA Agents and Providence detectives stopped a Nissan Maxima on Lenox Street in Providence, seized 62 kilograms of cocaine, and arrested the defendants: **Franklin Soto Pena**, 38, of 2001 Felix Road, Apt. 31, New Bedford, **Julian Sahagun Rodriguez**, 25, 15184 Woodburn Monitor Road, Woodburn, Oregon, and **Pedro Gonzales**, 32, address unknown.

The indictment charges all three defendants with conspiracy to possess and distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine, and with possessing with intent to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine. The defendants were arraigned yesterday before Magistrate Judge Lincoln D. Almond, pleaded not guilty to the charges, and were ordered detained pending further proceedings. They are being held at the Wyatt Federal Detention Center, Central Falls.

-more-

An indictment is merely an allegation and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. Upon conviction, each of the offenses charged in the indictment carries a minimum penalty of ten years imprisonment and a maximum of life imprisonment plus a \$4,000,000 fine.

The 62-kilogram seizure ranks among the largest cocaine seizures by law enforcement in Rhode Island. In 1987, DEA and U.S. Customs agents seized 55 kilograms of cocaine that had been smuggled into the Port of Providence aboard the Magranel, a ship out of Barranquilla Colombia. Last year, Rhode Island State Police detectives working with the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Task Force seized 34 kilograms of cocaine from a car and a storage bin in Warwick.

The **Drug Enforcement Administration** and **Providence Police** investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Adi Goldstein is prosecuting it.

-30-

Contact: 401-709-5032

E-mail: thomas.connell@usdoj.gov